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Final progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia

I. Introduction

1. By its resolution 2333 (2016), the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) for a final period until 30 March 2018 and requested to be kept informed of the situation in Liberia and the implementation of the Mission's mandate. The present report provides an update on major developments that have occurred in the country since the issuance of my previous report, of 16 June 2017 (S/2017/510), including the electoral process and the democratic transfer of political power, the closure of UNMIL and the transformation of the United Nations engagement in Liberia.

II. Major developments

A. Political situation

2. The presidential and legislative elections and the subsequent transfer of presidential power from Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to George Manneh Weah on 22 January 2018 dominated the reporting period, which was also defined by the ongoing establishment of a new Government, the launch of the development agenda planning process and the conclusion of the UNMIL mandate on 30 March, which was marked by a visit to Liberia by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Amina J. Mohammed, on 22 and 23 March.

Electoral process

3. Electoral preparations began with the exhibition of the preliminary voter roll from 12 to 17 June 2017, followed by the candidate nomination period from 19 to 21 July. While there were complaints concerning the final registration roll, these were eventually resolved with the support of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNMIL and other international partners.

4. The National Elections Commission approved 1,026 legislative candidates, comprising 84.1 per cent men and 15.9 per cent women, from 26 political parties. The Commission also approved 20 presidential candidates, including one woman. The elections held on 10 October proceeded peacefully, with more than 1.6 million, or 75.2 per cent, of the country's 2.1 million registered voters casting their ballots. As

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no candidate received an absolute majority, on 19 October the Commission announced that a presidential run-off would be held on 7 November between the two front-runners, Senator George Weah of the Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) and Joseph Boakai, Vice-President of Liberia and a member of the ruling Unity Party.

5. The run-off election was delayed owing to a legal challenge from the Liberty Party, whose presidential candidate, Charles Brumskine, placed third and which was subsequently joined by the ruling party, both of which denounced the voter list and alleged massive irregularities and fraud. On 7 December, the Supreme Court, after granting a stay order on 6 November on the run-off to allow litigation to run its course, dismissed the case and ordered the National Elections Commission to proceed, provided that it addressed a number of irregularities encountered during the first round, in particular regarding the duplication of names on the voter roll. With support from international partners, including ECOWAS, UNDP and UNMIL, the Commission took corrective measures and fulfilled the requirements set by the Supreme Court. On 26 December, the Commission held the run-off election, which had a turn-out of nearly 56 per cent of registered voters. On 29 December, the Commission declared George Weah the winner, with 61.5 per cent of valid votes cast.

6. Throughout the electoral process, my Special Representative for Liberia, Farid Zarif, proactively carried out his mandate of good offices and political support, encouraging political leaders to comply with their commitments under the Farmington River Declaration to resolve elections-related disputes through legal and peaceful means. On 4 July 2017, the Independent National Commission on Human Rights, with UNMIL support, convened a conference that brought together representatives from political parties, civil society organizations and the media, during which political parties committed themselves to non-violence and to focusing on issues and avoiding hate speech during campaign activities.

7. During both rounds of the elections, UNMIL supported the situation rooms established by the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding and the Angie Brooks International Centre for Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security, and regional and local non-governmental organizations. The Mission also coordinated with ECOWAS, the Mano River Union and the African Union, as well as with the European Union, the Carter Centre and the National Democratic Institute. Four joint communiqués of UNMIL, the African Union and ECOWAS were issued at critical points during the electoral period, calling upon all political actors to remain peaceful and accept the will of the Liberian people. The electoral process also benefited from the support of the then-Chair of the African Union, President Alpha Condé of Guinea, and the Chair of ECOWAS, President Faure Gnassingbé of Togo, who visited Liberia on 1 November. In addition, to complement the good offices of my Special Representative for Liberia, Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of Nigeria and, a member of my High-level Advisory Board on Mediation, visited Liberia on 28 December with my Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel, Mohamed Ibn Chambas. The Peacebuilding Commission also provided political accompaniment throughout the electoral period, convening an ambassadorial meeting on 21 November and expert meetings on electoral preparations.

The new Government

8. The fifty-fourth Legislature began its session on 15 January 2018. A week later, on 22 January, George Weah was sworn in as President of Liberia in a ceremony attended by thousands of Liberian citizens and numerous African Heads of State and Government, as well as other foreign dignitaries. In his inaugural address, President Weah reaffirmed his campaign promise to work towards poverty eradication and equality, and committed to a "pro-poor" agenda — a pledge on which he elaborated during his first "State of the Nation" address, given on 29 January, in which he

committed to prioritizing, inter alia, education, health, gender, youth empowerment, infrastructure development, agriculture, the rule of law, land reform, security sector reform and accountability. He also proposed constitutional amendments that would remove exclusionary clauses and announced a 25 per cent cut to his personal salary, encouraging other branches of government to follow suit given the dire fiscal situation that his Government had inherited.

9. For his first international trip as Head of State, President Weah attended the African Union summit held in Addis Ababa on 28 January, which was followed by visits to France, Morocco and Senegal from 14 to 23 February. Among those who pledged support for Liberia during his travels were Presidents Macky Sall of Senegal and Emmanuel Macron of France, Moroccan government officials and potential investors, including high-profile African soccer players. The Vice-President of the World Bank pledged $20 million in additional budget support and $5 million to enhance the sports agenda of Liberia. On 5 March, President Weah travelled to Nigeria for a State visit, during which he and President Muhammadu Buhari discussed issues of mutual concern and President Weah sought the support of Nigeria in improving the education, health, agriculture, mining and private sectors of Liberia, while also expressing appreciation for the role played by Nigeria in maintaining peace and stability in Liberia.

10. The National Elections Commission has scheduled for 8 May the by-elections for the Montserrado County and Bong County senatorial seats, vacated by President Weah and the newly elected Vice-President, Jewel Howard-Taylor, respectively, although the budget for conducting the elections has not been approved and the Commission still has some outstanding financial obligations relating to the 2017 elections.

11. The Deputy Secretary-General visited Liberia on 21 and 23 March to participate in events marking the closure of UNMIL, the conferences on national reconciliation and the launch of the new national development agenda, as well as the handover of UNMIL Radio to ECOWAS, as described below. She also held separate meetings with President Weah; the women's legislative caucus and representatives of civil society; and development partners, and visited a project funded by UNMIL assessed contributions that was aimed at improving food security in New Kru Town, a suburb of Monrovia. In all of her interactions, the Deputy Secretary-General stressed that the Sustainable Development Goals provided the needed foundation for sustainable development and sustaining peace, as did national reconciliation, which could be fully achieved only with the full participation of all citizens, including women and young people.

12. The Chair of the Liberia configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission also visited Liberia from 21 to 24 March, to signal the ongoing willingness of the Commission to support Liberia.

National reconciliation

13. Owing to lack of funding or legislative delays, limited progress was made in implementing aspects of the Liberia peacebuilding plan of 4 April 2017 (see S/2017/282). The plan detailed reconciliation objectives to be completed prior to the departure of UNMIL and set out specific proposals for advancing reform legislation and youth policies. Donor-funded reconciliation initiatives linked to the prevention of election-related conflict, including youth engagement, were more successful.

14. From August 2017 to March 2018, the outgoing and incoming Governments revised the Strategic Road Map for National Healing, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation, with support from UNMIL. In addition to confirming the relevance of the Road Map's 12 existing thematic areas to national reconciliation, it was decided

to develop annexes focused on resource mobilization, government commitments in the peacebuilding plan, policy, and programme interventions based on the social cohesion and reconciliation index findings.

15. During the same period, non-governmental organizations facilitated reconciliation dialogues in Bong, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh, Lofa, Margibi, Nimba, Rivercess and Sinoe Counties, which culminated in a Government-led national reconciliation conference held in Monrovia on 21 and 22 March. In closing the conference, President Weah recalled the short-lived impact of previous reconciliation initiatives, including those he had attempted while serving as Peace Ambassador in 2012, after which people had returned to their old resentments and divisions. Paraphrasing the late Nelson Mandela, the President stressed that reconciliation would take root and be sustained only when all citizens felt heard and included, especially in the economic life of the country, and when there was a change in people's hearts and minds so that all Liberians saw one another as members of a single family. The Deputy Secretary-General underscored the importance of full political and economic inclusion in order for reconciliation to be achieved, as required for sustaining the peace.

16. As at 30 March 2018, legislation proposed four years previously to promote reconciliation, specifically the land rights and local government bills, remained pending. In December 2017, the county service centre for Montserrado County opened, completing the Government's de-concentration programme that had begun in February 2015. Each of the 15 counties now hosts a service centre, allowing citizens, for the first time in the history of Liberia, to access services outside Monrovia, which was achieved with support from UNMIL and other partners. Sustaining this expansion in the delivery of government services will require adequate provisions in the national budget to meet operational costs, as well as the adoption of the local government bill.

B. Security situation

17. The security situation remained stable. The Liberia National Police recorded 10,263 incidents during the period from 1 June 2017 to 30 March 2018, comprising primarily such crimes as theft, burglary, robbery and simple assault, as well as sporadic demonstrations and land disputes. The Liberia National Police effectively responded, without the use of force, to all incidents, including in remote counties, although police officers used personal assets to compensate for understaffing and inadequate resources.

18. The Liberia National Police organized and led a joint election security task force that included all law enforcement agencies and UNMIL. Despite high political tension, no major security concern arose during the electoral period, including at large campaign rallies, some of which reached an estimated 80,000 persons. On 20 September, there was a clash between Liberty Party and CDC supporters in Sanniquellie, Nimba County, resulting in one serious injury. On 21 September, supporters of the Unity Party and CDC candidates contesting the legislative seat in Paynesville, Montserrado County, clashed, resulting in minor injuries caused by stone-throwing. The Liberia National Police brought both incidents under control without using force. During the inauguration ceremony on 22 January, some 50 people were reportedly injured during a stampede, which was brought under control by the Liberia National Police without the use of force.

C. Humanitarian situation

19. As at 30 March 2018, Liberia hosted 10,791 registered Ivorian refugees, down from the peak of approximately 224,000 reached in 2011. Since December 2015, when the voluntary return process resumed after the Ebola virus disease epidemic, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has facilitated the return of 27,638 refugees. Conditions in Côte d'Ivoire remained generally conducive to return, although some refugees cited insecurity as well as lack of access to land, basic services or livelihood opportunities in areas of return as disincentives, in addition to scepticism about the national reconciliation and social cohesion processes. To mitigate those concerns, UNHCR organized visits by refugees to villages of return so they could assess conditions and the availability of services.

20. During the period from 1 June 2017 to 12 March 2018, there were 23 outbreaks of diseases, including Lassa fever, measles, monkeypox, meningococcal disease and shigellosis; out of 352 cases of such diseases, 13 deaths were reported. The World Health Organization (WHO) and other partners supported the Ministry of Health and the National Public Health Institute in strengthening national capacity for detection, prevention and response with respect to public health threats and events. WHO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, UNDP and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) also supported the Government in strengthening multi-hazard preparedness and response capacity, with funding from the multi-partner trust fund established to address Ebola. As a result, international health regulations are applied at all points of entry into the country.

D. Human rights

21. The human rights situation continued to be characterized by violations perpetrated primarily against women and children. Between June 2017 and February 2018, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection recorded 596 cases of sexual and gender-based violence, including 391 cases of rape or sexual assault; 67.3 per cent of the victims were children. However, societal and cultural factors, as well as systemic shortcomings in the criminal justice system, contribute to impunity for such crimes. Harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation also continued. Amid protracted delays in establishing a legislative framework criminalizing such practices, then-President Johnson Sirleaf signed an executive order on 20 January 2018 criminalizing the genital mutilation of girls under 18 years of age, only partially achieving the full criminalization of female genital mutilation, to which her Government had committed itself in 2016 in the context of the universal periodic review.

22. On 15 June 2017, the Civil Society Human Rights Advocacy Platform, a consortium of national human rights-focused non-governmental organizations established in December 2016 with UNMIL support, signed a memorandum of understanding with the Independent National Commission on Human Rights aimed at enhancing the joint coordination, monitoring and decentralization of human rights initiatives. Between August and December 2017, human rights-focused civil society networks were established in Bong, Grand Bassa, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh, Maryland, Nimba and Rivercess Counties.

E. Economic situation

23. Characterizing the country as "broke", President Weah set up a committee, on 28 February 2018, charged with developing an agenda for rapid recovery and

transformation. The 2017 estimate for the current account balance is minus $0.6 billion, or minus 26.6 per cent of gross domestic product, while the budget deficit is estimated at minus 4.7 per cent of gross domestic product. During his "State of the Nation" address, the President reported a 13 per cent decline in revenue to $489.1 million in 2017 compared with $565.1 million in 2016. The global decline in commodity prices, the residual impact of the 2014 Ebola outbreak and the leakage of public funds through corruption have had a negative impact on the macroeconomic situation. Gross domestic product is projected to rise to 4 per cent in 2018 as a result of expansions in gold production and agriculture; by 2020, growth is projected to rise to 6 per cent, which would still be below the pre-Ebola level of 8.7 per cent.

24. Consolidation measures attempted during previous fiscal periods proved ineffective; budget imbalances remain unsustainable, impeding growth and development. Recurrent expenditures consumed 87 per cent of the national budget for 2016/17; wages alone accounted for 57 per cent of the budget. Revised allocations in the budget for 2017/18 are recommended in order to cut certain expenditures on goods and services, such as travel, communication and workshops, leading to a reduction of $27.4 million from $563.5 million, in recognition of the requirement to reduce expenditure. Allocations, however, protect compensation, drugs and food, among other things. Also needed is economic diversification, which will require investments in foreign trade and infrastructure while effective efforts are made to combat corruption. Depreciation of the Liberian dollar against the United States dollar accelerated during the electoral period, with the exchange rate rising to 125.6 on 5 December 2017 from 117.2 on 30 September 2017. Halting or reversing this trend will require increased domestic production that reduces dependency on imports and addresses supply- and demand-side constraints. The exchange rate and changing consumer patterns are pushing small businesses to suffer exchange losses for goods that they buy in United States dollars but trade in Liberian dollars. Domestic prices are rising. The retail price of a 50 kg bag of rice, a staple food, has risen by 25 per cent since September 2017 compared with the same period in 2016, while exchange rate depreciation is leading to high prices of inputs. Prices of petroleum products have also risen, raising transportation costs, which affect most significantly Liberians living below the poverty line.

III. National security and justice capacity

A. National security strategy and architecture

25. The revised national security strategy and implementation plan were completed in September 2017, with support from UNMIL, and are scheduled for approval by the National Security Council in April 2018. The strategy, which emphasizes human security, clarifies the roles and responsibilities of security institutions. The costs of its implementation are being factored into an ongoing public expenditure review that will assist the Government in sustaining the financial planning of the justice and security sectors, which is being led by the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, with support from the World Bank and the United Nations.

26. Efforts continued to implement the Liberia National Police Act of 2016, the Liberia Immigration Service Act and the Liberia Firearms and Ammunition Control Act. Policy management boards for the police and immigration services established during the reporting period contributed to the development and approval of regulations and administrative instructions; however, no action was taken to establish the civilian oversight boards provided for under the Acts. Although the uniform code of military justice was enacted in October 2017, it has yet to be fully operationalized; the army remains subject to the civilian justice system in accordance with a

memorandum of understanding signed between the Ministries of Justice and Defence. A draft public safety act that includes the regulation of private security companies was finalized in February and is awaiting review by the Government.

27. Since October 2017, the gender and security sector task force, which comprises three ministries and eight security sector agencies, has undertaken training and capacity development activities along with information exchange and advocacy with a view to increasing the participation of women in security sector reform and to mainstream gender into security operations. In addition, to widen public participation, four open dialogues were held by the security sector reform think tank at the University of Liberia.

28. With the end of the UNMIL mandate on 30 March, United Nations support for the justice and security sectors will continue to be provided under a three-year joint programme led by UNDP and focused on the development of institutions, including the Liberia National Police and the Liberia Immigration Service. The gender and security sector task force will receive financial support from the Peacebuilding Fund, which will be managed by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. Bilateral and regional support is expected to continue; the Government has also begun to explore options for expanding the cooperation to include new bilateral partners.

B. Liberia National Police

29. As at 30 March 2018, the strength of the Liberia National Police stood at 5,053 officers, including 959 women. Seventy-five per cent of the police service is deployed in Montserrado County.

30. The Liberia National Police led electoral security operations through a joint security task force that planned and implemented the nationwide deployment of 7,355 law enforcement officers. Throughout the electoral period, the Liberia National Police were proactive, focusing on community-oriented policing and conflict prevention, initiating and sustaining effective engagement with community leaders and local youth associations and communicating with political parties. After each electoral round, the Liberia National Police, with UNMIL support, conducted after-action reviews in which challenges were identified and recommendations were developed that focused on improving the chain of command, human resource management, logistics and media engagement.

31. In January 2018, President Weah appointed a new Inspector General and three new deputies from within the police service. The Deputy Inspector General for Administration, the ranking female officer in the Liberia National Police, was reappointed. In February, the Liberia National Police conducted a self-assessment to determine strengths and weaknesses, prioritize areas for institutional and operational development, and review progress in the implementation of the Liberia National Police Act. The findings have been incorporated into the police's development framework for 2018, which reflects the structural and organizational capacity that the service requires in order to consistently deliver high-quality law enforcement services for all citizens.

C. Liberia Immigration Service

32. As at 30 March 2018, the strength of the Liberia Immigration Service stood at 2,606 personnel, including 756 women, 63 per cent of whom were deployed to border areas.

33. The Liberia Immigration Service took significant steps to strengthen border management and security during the reporting period, undertaking community engagement in border areas, implementing the migration information and data analysis system in four strategic official points of entry and training 212 officers in integrated border management. Those efforts, which were supported by UNMIL and IOM, were aimed at promoting regular migration and addressing transnational crime.

34. President Weah reappointed the Commissioner General and the Deputy Commissioner General for Administration of the Liberia Immigration Service. In February, the Service undertook a self-assessment process to identify its strengths and weaknesses and key priorities for institutional development.

D. Justice and corrections

35. Election-related pressures dominated the focus of the legal system during the reporting period. Both UNDP and UNMIL provided support for electoral dispute resolution mechanisms at the National Elections Commission, the Ministry of Justice and the Liberia National Bar Association. Those mechanisms functioned effectively, building confidence in the fairness and professionalism of the judiciary.

36. In November 2017, 60 newly trained magistrates were deployed to 59 magisterial courts in all 15 counties; Liberia now has 353 magistrates serving in all counties. The Judicial Institute began to train an additional class of 60 prospective magistrates. With support from UNMIL, instructors received training in human rights, which was also mainstreamed into the curriculum, and future training will include gender and sexual and gender-based violence.

37. In January 2018, policies were finalized that are focused on sentencing guidelines, legal aid and a hearing procedure for complaints against lawyers. However, the justice system continued to face systemic shortcomings, which also had a negative impact on living conditions and security at correctional facilities, where nine prison escapes were reported. As at 30 March, 1,496 persons, or 58 per cent of the prison population, were pretrial detainees, representing a decrease of 7 per cent since the issuance of my previous report in June 2017.

E. Armed Forces of Liberia

38. The strength of the Armed Forces of Liberia stood at 1,948 personnel as at 30 March 2018, in addition to 60 personnel in the Liberian Coast Guard. The army receives mentoring from the United States of America and ECOWAS; UNMIL provided some training on explosive ordnance disposal, operational planning and predeployment training for the 75 troops contributed by Liberia to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

39. The army continued to face operational challenges due in part to insufficient funding. UNMIL, through quick-impact projects, supported the renovation of army barracks in Grand Bassa and Lofa Counties to facilitate deployment at borders with Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea.

IV. Closure of the United Nations Mission in Liberia

A. Military component

40. UNMIL has been progressively drawing down since 2006, reducing from its peak authorized strength of 15,250 military personnel. The withdrawal of the 434

military personnel provided for in resolution 2333 (2016), including a company and aviation, medical and staff officers, took place between 31 December and 30 March. The force headquarters formally closed on 28 February with the departure of the Force Commander.

41. The quick-reaction force established within the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) in accordance with Security Council resolution 2162 (2014) and transferred to MINUSMA in accordance with Council resolution 2295 (2016) ceased its readiness to respond in Liberia with the end of the UNMIL mandate.

B. Police component

42. The police component of UNMIL has been progressively drawing down from its peak authorized strength of 1,795, reaching a ceiling of 310 personnel by 28 February 2017 in accordance with resolution 2333 (2016), including two formed police units and 50 individual police officers consolidated in Monrovia. The withdrawal of the component took place in a phased manner beginning on 31 January 2018 and concluded with the departure of the remaining United Nations police officers and the Police Commissioner on 30 March.

C. Civilian component

43. The departure of 808 civilian staff provided for in General Assembly resolution 71/304 of 30 June 2017 has been conducted in a phased manner, on the basis of an assessment of work and comparative reviews, with a view to ensuring mandate delivery until 30 March 2018. Surges in departures were aligned with periods of relatively reduced substantive activities. As at 30 March, UNMIL had 521 civilian personnel, comprising 174 international personnel, 269 national personnel and 78 United Nations Volunteers; a further 141 personnel will depart by 30 April. During the period from 1 May to 30 June, the departure of the 380 personnel remaining to complete the Mission's liquidation will be gradually carried out.

D. Liquidation process

44. Given the complexity of liquidating a mission with a historically large logistical footprint, UNMIL formed a steering committee and a technical working group in September 2017 to oversee the process. In addition, technical specialists were brought in to provide support, while external and internal auditors were advised about the deadlines for reviewing mission activities in advance of the archiving of records and the departure of personnel.

45. Particular emphasis has been placed on ensuring an environmentally responsible liquidation. In July 2017, UNMIL had 79 field sites. As at 30 March 2018, nine sites remained, all of which will be closed by 30 June. For each site that is closed, the Environmental Protection Agency of Liberia conducts an inspection jointly with UNMIL and provides certification that it was left in an environmentally sound manner.

46. UNMIL has made gifts of equipment to government and regional entities, non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies, in keeping with existing financial regulations and rules and following an evaluation of the suitability of the requests. Among the donated assets were prefabricated buildings, passenger and specialized vehicles, generators, medical and information technology equipment and office furniture; part of the Mission's logistics base at the Port of Monrovia was handed over to ECOWAS to serve as a forward logistics base for its regional Standby Force.

E. Serious misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse

47. Proactive outreach was conducted in all communities where UNMIL troops have been deployed since 2003. Working with the Office of Internal Oversight Services, UNMIL identified a number of individuals who had made allegations against former UNMIL personnel. As part of a victim-centred approach, efforts were made to respond to the medical, psychosocial and legal needs of the complainants. Quick-impact projects provided vocational training opportunities in Monrovia for both victims and community members to lessen stigmatization and vulnerability to future exploitation. Furthermore, UNMIL and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization launched a literacy programme for persons victimized by, or vulnerable to, sexual exploitation and abuse.

48. All allegations recorded were referred for appropriate investigation by Member States or jointly with the United Nations. The Organization will continue to follow up on the outcomes of those investigations for which information from the Member State concerned remains pending.

49. UNMIL established an exit plan to facilitate the handover of its responsibilities after the completion of its liquidation. Any allegation pending as at 30 June 2018 will be transferred to the regional conduct and discipline team based in MINUSMA, which will be responsible for processing remaining matters. In addition, any new allegation made against former UNMIL personnel may be brought to the Resident Coordinator Office, which will be responsible for receiving complaints and transmitting them to the conduct and discipline teams in MINUSMA and the Department of Field Support for appropriate review and follow-up action, including referral for investigation. UNMIL has also funded a project aimed at strengthening the Government's capacity to respond when it receives claims against former UNMIL personnel.

F. Safety and security of personnel

50. No major security incidents against United Nations personnel or installations were recorded during the period from 1 June 2017 to 30 March 2018. There were 105 traffic accidents involving United Nations vehicles and one emergency landing of a United Nations aircraft. One armed robbery, six burglaries, one attempted burglary, two thefts, one attempted theft and three minor fires were recorded at the residences of United Nations personnel, while street crime included two armed robberies, two attempted armed robberies, four robberies, three thefts, five assaults, six incidents of intimidation/harassment/threats of violence and two arrest and detention incidents. Five United Nations staff members died of natural causes.

51. With the conclusion of the UNMIL mandate, responsibility for the safety and security of United Nations personnel and facilities rests fully with the Government of Liberia. Security for the United Nations country team will be coordinated by the Department of Safety and Security with three professional security officers and five local security associates. A common radio room will provide 24-hour coverage in close collaboration with government security counterparts.

V. Transition of the United Nations in Liberia

52. My Special Representative for Liberia, Farid Zarif, concluded his assignment on 30 March, in line with the end of the UNMIL mandate. Building on best practices from the closure of UNOCI, some continuity of United Nations leadership will be facilitated by the retention of the Resident Coordinator at the level of Assistant Secretary-General. In that regard, my Deputy Special Representative, Yacoub El

Hillo, retaining his functions as Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, assumed leadership of the United Nations family in Liberia on 31 March.

53. The United Nations is working to strengthen the Resident Coordinator Office to ensure that it is able to deliver on strategic requirements in the areas of political and economic analysis, peacebuilding and mediation, and field coordination, which will support the people and the Government of Liberia in sustaining peace. In August 2017, the Government and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) signed an agreement authorizing the establishment of an OHCHR country office, which commenced its work on 2 April 2018. Meanwhile, since December 2017 the UNMIL headquarters has been transitioning into a "one United Nations house" where 16 agencies, funds and programmes will eventually be co-located, which will reduce operational and transactional costs while increasing coherence, coordination and delivery.

54. Communicating to the people of Liberia about the transformation of the United Nations engagement in their country remained a priority. To that end, a public information campaign involving national civil society organizations and traditional communicators was focused on ensuring that all local communities were aware that, although the peacekeeping operation would come to an end on 30 March, the United Nations country team would continue its work after the departure of UNMIL. Such messaging was also aimed at raising awareness about issues essential for maintaining peace and stability.

55. An integrated transition plan jointly prepared by UNMIL, the United Nations country team, the Government of Liberia and its development partners was adopted under Executive Order 91 on 10 January as the working document to guide the transition. The plan is focused on both the transfer of authority to a new Government and the evolution of the United Nations engagement in Liberia.

56. The Peacebuilding Commission provided political accompaniment to the transition from UNMIL to the follow-on United Nations presence, actively engaging through a visit of the Chair of the Liberia configuration and the convening of ambassadorial and expert meetings on preparations, as well as providing a forum to discuss and support the implementation of the peacebuilding plan. The Commission has expressed its willingness to continue to provide support and accompaniment to the country beyond the transition.

57. On 23 March, President Weah, the Deputy Secretary-General and my Special Representative participated in a conference in Monrovia, dubbed the "Liberia moment", that was convened by the Government to launch the process of formulating a new national development agenda for the period 2018–2024. In addition to senior government officials and United Nations and development partners, the event included the voices of young people and other civil society representatives. In his speech, President Weah reaffirmed his commitment to ensuring that all Liberians had a voice in the future of their country. The Deputy Secretary-General welcomed the space made for young people in the new Government, while also stressing that the inclusion of women as indispensable partners would make for a better nation. She also welcomed the intention to ensure that national reconciliation and social cohesion would serve as the basis for the new development agenda. The event provided an opportunity for the Government, its partners and civil society to express appreciation for the role played by UNMIL in establishing the foundations of the peace in Liberia.

58. A Liberia multi-partner trust fund has been established; the final steps for its activation are nearing completion. The pooled fund is aimed at increasing coherence in the delivery by the United Nations and partners of joint programmes to sustain peace and address priority development challenges. Prioritization will be guided by

the Liberia peacebuilding plan, the forthcoming national development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. The Peacebuilding Fund lent its catalytic support to the peacebuilding plan in the amount of $10 million in 2017 and has indicated its willingness to extend its support to priority areas of the multi-partner trust fund in 2018.

59. UNMIL also continued its efforts to facilitate sustained regional engagement in Liberia, including in cooperation with the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel. On 23 March 2018, President Weah and the Deputy Secretary-General participated in a ceremony during which the UNMIL Radio station, facilities and broadcasting network were handed over to the ECOWAS Commission, which commenced broadcasting within Liberia as a regional radio station, using the same on-air personalities, on 31 March. Eventually, ECOWAS plans to expand the reach of the radio station throughout its regional community, broadcasting in three regional languages. As the facilities housing the radio station are adjacent to the United Nations House, ECOWAS relocated its in-country headquarters and early warning system to the compound in February 2018.

VI. Financial aspects

60. The General Assembly, by its resolution 71/304, appropriated the amount of $110 million for the maintenance of UNMIL for the period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018.

61. As at 20 March 2018, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNMIL amounted to $26.4 million. Total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at the same date amounted to $2,256.2 million.

62. Reimbursement of troop and formed police costs has been made for the period up to 31 January 2018, while reimbursement of the costs of contingent-owned equipment has been made for the period up to 31 December 2017, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

VII. Observations

63. When Ellen Johnson Sirleaf handed presidential power over to George Manneh Weah at noon on 22 January 2018 in Monrovia, thousands of Liberian citizens and dozens of regional and international leaders witnessed a moment symbolically concluding a historical arch spanning more than a century and a half of constitutionally sanctioned exclusion of the vast majority of the population, a quarter century of political crisis, 14 years of successive brutal civil wars and nearly 15 subsequent years of laying the foundations for recovering from conflict. The inauguration of President Weah was a milestone symbolizing the burgeoning democratic maturity of the oldest republic in Africa and its progress along the path of post-conflict transformation. I wish to recognize the contribution that President Johnson Sirleaf made to the consolidation of peace and other achievements during the 12 years of her tenure.

64. Liberia is a country fully at peace with itself and with its neighbours. Consequently, on 30 March UNMIL concluded its mandate. It is important to recall the historical context: the Liberia to which UNMIL was deployed in October 2003 was a completely failed State in which three warring factions controlled sections of Monrovia and the interior; the public sector had collapsed; the infrastructure lay in ruins; the national police and the army had disintegrated into various factions; what remained of the security sector was dominated by a proliferation of agencies created

by successive regimes to persecute political opponents and repress citizens; the justice sector had disintegrated; more than a third of the population was displaced; an estimated 80 per cent of women and girls were victims of sexual violence; and criminal economic exchange, dominated by the illegal exploitation of natural resources, was thriving. Despite that very low starting point, Liberia has had a remarkable journey of transformation, accompanied by UNMIL, and is on the cusp of a new era that promises greater inclusiveness and equitable participation of all Liberian citizens in the political and economic space.

65. I congratulate the people of Liberia and their political leaders on the progress achieved in restoring peace, and on their resolve to remain peaceful throughout the electoral process. I also salute the National Elections Commission and the Supreme Court, which carried out their responsibilities with professionalism and independence, thereby helping to strengthen perceptions about the credibility of the electoral process. I also recognize the effective, professional and peaceful manner in which the Liberia National Police, in collaboration with other law enforcement agencies, managed security throughout the country. These elections were a positive demonstration of the capacity and capability of national institutions, which has had a positive effect on public confidence. Furthermore, they are a demonstration of a fact that I have stressed in my reports on Liberia over the years: consolidating the hard-won peace requires sustained efforts to build institutions that are inclusive, corruption-free and able to provide opportunities for, and services to, all citizens.

66. I also wish to recognize the essential role played by civil society, which helped to restore peace in Liberia and which continues its tireless efforts to sustain that hard-won peace. Religious and traditional leaders and women and youth representatives, as well as electoral observation groups and the media, made many diverse contributions to the collective national effort aimed at maintaining a transparent and peaceful electoral process. Among the important initiatives were the Farmington River Declaration and the Liberian Youth Peace Declaration, as well as mediation efforts resulting in mutual recognition by the Legislature and the judiciary of each other's respective roles and responsibilities in accordance with the Constitution. Civil society will continue to have an invaluable role to play as a partner with the Government as it takes forward its reform agenda in a spirit of inclusion and transparency.

67. The new Government has inherited many challenges, not least of which are a dire economic situation and the limited progress achieved thus far in addressing the root causes of the conflict in Liberia, removing structural inequalities, enhancing accountable governance and building the democratic foundations of a nation that reflects the will and aspirations of all Liberians. I welcome President Weah's commitment to fighting corruption, promoting good governance and taking forward national reconciliation, constitutional reform and decentralization. These are critical processes that could help heal the cleavages of the past and build a unified nation for the future. They would also support his pro-poor development agenda, which will help sustain the peace and lay the foundation for sustainable development. His aspiration to transform the hearts and minds of the Liberian people so that they see one another as members of a single family is essential, as, in his words, a family tree can bend, but can never break.

68. I welcome the leadership that President Weah has demonstrated by urgently recasting the national budget to address the fiscal difficulties of the country, as well as his steps to fight corruption. I call upon the partners of Liberia to stand with this new Government as it moves forward with its efforts to correct the current shortcomings, while working to make the economy grow in order to generate the revenue needed to reduce its current dependence on donor aid, and also seeking to avoid transactions that put the country and communities at a disadvantage. President

Weah has also demonstrated a welcome commitment to placing the Sustainable Development Goals at the core of his national development plan in order to ensure that no one is left behind, as maintaining peace and development requires. I also welcome the intention of partners to align their support with the Government's vision, as they committed to doing during the "Liberia moment" event.

69. Consolidating peace requires the full commitment of the Government and citizens to a comprehensive and meaningful process of national reconciliation. I am encouraged by the new administration's determination to give the national reconciliation process a new impetus underpinned by a political vision, rather than disparate initiatives with limited impact, which characterized past reconciliation efforts. One of the objectives of such a process must be defining and agreeing on a shared sense of nation. This is particularly pertinent and potentially fraught with difficulties for Liberia, as the scars of the conflict, some of which were brought to light during the recent electoral process, have yet to heal. I continue to insist on the importance of adopting legislation that addresses the root causes of the conflict, such as the land reform and decentralization, which should be given priority attention and acted upon without further delay.

70. The young people of Liberia have declared, and have demonstrated, that they are the custodians of its peace. It will therefore be essential that the Government manage the considerable expectations of its predominantly youthful constituency, which is looking for the dividends of social and economic transformation that could provide opportunity and alleviate inequality. Managing those expectations will require herculean efforts on the part of the new administration, in addition to considerable support from its partners, and should be aimed at demonstrating a sincere commitment to bridging the continuing divides in Liberia by reaching out to the poorest and most disenfranchised, as part of the national development agenda. I am optimistic that such transformational change is within the grasp of the people and the Government of Liberia.

71. The socioeconomic situation of Liberia continues to have a negative impact on women and girls, including low levels of education; poverty; maternal mortality; and increased risks and exposure to sexual violence and harmful traditional practices. I am concerned by statistics such as the literacy rate — 80.6 per cent for males and 54.8 per cent for females — which demonstrate the impact of continued barriers that pose risks to girls at all levels, including with respect to education, sexual and gender-based violence, early marriage and teenage pregnancy, as well as other forms of abuse. I would therefore reiterate my call to the Legislature to prioritize the adoption of pending enabling legislation, in particular the proposed law on affirmative action for equal participation and representation, aimed at promoting women's political participation. I would also strongly urge the Legislature to amend the Domestic Violence Act to ensure the protection of women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence, in particular female genital mutilation.

72. While I welcome the increase in Liberia National Police female recruitment from 2 to 18 per cent, I encourage the new Government and other stakeholders to address women's marginalization and inequality in conformity with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Significant advances have been made since 2003 in the development of the legal and policy framework for the security sector, but gaps remain, including in terms of legislation to regulate private security companies and to modernize the Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation and the Liberia National Fire Service. Furthermore, it will be essential that the National Security Council review the revised national security strategy as a priority, which should be complemented by capacitating the Office of the National Security Adviser. I urge the Government of Liberia to prioritize the full implementation of police and immigration acts, in particular the establishment of the civilian oversight bodies provided for

therein. The Government should also commit additional resources to addressing systemic weaknesses in the justice system and harmonizing the formal and customary justice systems through urgent attention to the many unimplemented, yet nationally validated, recommendations pertaining to justice sector reform, including addressing an unacceptably high level of pretrial detentions. In addition, I strongly encourage donors and partners to continue to work closely with the United Nations and to maintain their support for the justice and security sectors of Liberia in the years ahead.

73. The closure of UNMIL brings to an end the peacekeeping phase of the United Nations engagement in the Mano River Union, which at one time also hosted operations in Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire. All of the Organization's peacekeeping endeavours in the subregion have stood on foundations set by regional organizations, including the Mano River Union, ECOWAS and the African Union. I therefore warmly welcome the fact that UNMIL Radio will serve as the nucleus of the regional radio station of ECOWAS, and that it will immediately sustain nationwide broadcasts in Liberia, while working towards full regional coverage, with the support of the Liberian Broadcasting System. I also welcome the fact that the ECOWAS Standby Force will benefit from the use of part of the former logistics base of UNMIL. The closure of the peacekeeping operation notwithstanding, the United Nations will remain closely engaged in supporting Liberia in meeting its challenges in sustaining peace and achieving sustainable development, including through the enhanced and strengthened Resident Coordinator Offices and the broader United Nations country team, which will include a separate OHCHR office. This arrangement will help to preserve the achievements of UNMIL, while also helping to sustain continued dialogue regarding the persistent human rights challenges that the country still faces.

74. I am enormously proud of the role played by UNMIL in restoring and sustaining peace in Liberia. My profound gratitude goes to each of the civilian and uniformed personnel who served with UNMIL over the course of its deployment, and their families, and pay particular tribute to the 202 United Nations peacekeepers who lost their lives in pursuit of peace in Liberia. I also wish to express appreciation to my Special Representative for Liberia, Farid Zarif, for his excellent leadership, and to his predecessors, all of whom contributed to the achievement of the UNMIL mandate. In addition, my appreciation goes to the Mission's troop- and police-contributing countries, and I wish to recognize in particular the role of ECOWAS, whose green helmets paved the way for UNMIL, as well as the African Union, the Mano River Union, the European Union and other regional organizations, multilateral and bilateral partners, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, non-governmental organizations and all other partners, for their invaluable contributions to the restoration of peace in Liberia.

Annex

United Nations Mission in Liberia: military and police strength as at 31 March 2018

	Military component					
Country	*Military observers*	*Staff officers*	*Troops*	*Total*	*Formed police units*	*Police officers*
Bangladesh	–	–	–	–		–
Benin	–	–	–	–		–
Bhutan	–	–	–	–		–
China	–	–	–	–	–	–
Egypt	–	–	–	–		–
Gambia	–	–	–	–		–
Germany	–	–	–	–		–
Ghana	–	–	–	–		–
India	–	–	–	–		–
Kenya	–	–	–	–		–
Nepal	–	–	–	–		–
Nigeria	–	–	–	–	12	–
Norway	–	–	–	–		–
Pakistan	–	–	12	12		–
Poland	–	–	–	–		–
Republic of Korea	–	–	–	–		–
Romania	–	–	–	–		–
Russian Federation	–	–	–	–		–
Senegal	–	–	–	–		–
Serbia	–	–	–	–		–
Sweden	–	–	–	–		–
Togo	–	–	–	–		–
Turkey	–	–	–	–		–
Ukraine	–	–	–	–		–
United States of America	–	–	–	–		–
Zambia	–	–	–	–		–
Total	**–**	**–**	**12**	**12**	**12**	**–**

UNMIL
Deployment
as of March 2018
International boundary
County boundary
National capital
Airport
Main road
Railroad
GUINEA
SIERRA LEONE
LIBERIA
CÔTE D'IVOIRE
Monrovia
Sanniquellie
Zorzor
Voinjama
Kolahun
Zigida
Salayea
Gbarnga
Foequelleh
Saclepea
Buto
Tappita
Yekepa
Ganta
Beatrice
Botota
Bopolu
Gbarma
Tubmanburg
Bong Town
Sarala
Kakata
Bensonville
Campbellburg
Marshall
Klay
Bomber Junction
Bo Water Side
Tene
Senje
Robertsport
Zuie
Gumgbeta
Mendekoma
Feya
Vahun
Kantford
Edina
Buchanan
Tiade Town
Yeppa Town
Timbo
Cestos City
Greenville
Harper
Barclayville
Fish Town
Sasstown
Grand Cess
Nana Kru
Pibo
Nimneke
Kodeke
Nyaake
Tchien
Zwedru
Gaio
Toe Town
Zwin Town
Tiwai Town
Ghiyene
Sheklio
Fenneken
Jaakaken
Tchipo
Tuake
Yibuke
Kpoto
Barre
Kpo
Bolokeh
Gletpu
Kangbei
Department of Field Support
Cartographic Section